

MINEHEAD URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH'S REPORT FOR 1951.

The Registrar General's figure for the population of the town is 7,339, the figure for 1950 being 7,331 and for 1949, 7,232. It is probable that during the summer holidays this figure is more than doubled. The seasonal increase usually commences in June and continues until September. There are also minor variations at Easter and Christmas. The large majority of the hotels, boarding houses and apartments close down for the winter months. The health of the community during the year was good.

Vital Statistics.

	Total.	M.	F.
Live Births - Legitimate	79	38	41
Illegitimate	4	-	4

Birth Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population 11.3

	Total.	M.	F.
Deaths	125	50	75

Death Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population 17.03

Death Rate of Infants under one year of age:-

All infants per 1,000 live births:- 12.05

Water Supply.

This has been on the whole satisfactory throughout the year. The main supply from Nutscale Reservoir was always in full supply as well as the subsidiary supplies from Broadwood, Longwood and Longcombe.

Temporary shortages occurred in the Periton and Hopcott areas due to heavy consumption in lower levels of the town during the height of the season. A new trunk main has been connected to remedy this defect and should have a beneficial effect.

The quality of the water supply to the town is satisfactory. As the supply consists of a mixture of treated and untreated water it is not possible to classify the bacteriological results separately. Of the 44 samples examined bacteriologically 42 were in all respects satisfactory; 2 were not in all respects satisfactory.

The results of the Conference with the Council's Consulting Engineers concerning plans for sterilisation and storage of supplies are still before the Council.

No action of a permanent nature has been taken in respect of such reports of contamination as have been received and investigated. Any such action would involve the extensive alterations at present being deliberated.

The slight plumbo action at present in the Longwood supply is not sufficient to warrant any action.

With the exception of 8, which will shortly be replaced, practically all the dwelling houses (2,346) in the town are supplied from public mains direct to the houses.

Swimming Pools.

There is one swimming pool situated on the sea front which is privately owned. This pool is filled with sea water which undergoes chlorination before being admitted to the pool. The filtration and chlorination plant are under skilled management and the engineer is on duty the whole of the time the bath is in operation. Frequent testing indicates that the water carries the necessary amount of residual chlorine to ensure a safe bathing water. Twenty eight samples were taken and submitted for bacteriological examination and all were found to be satisfactory.

Sewage Disposal.

No sewerage works have taken place during the year. The lower parts of the town still suffer considerable inconvenience owing to the inability of the existing sewers to deal with heavy storm water.

It is questionable if the storm drainage is dealt with as a separate entity whether the whole question of the drainage of the lower part of the town will be solved.

Another matter in this connection which requires consideration is the sewage outfall. It may well be that the solution of this problem will also solve that indicated in the previous paragraph. The Council has had these matters under discussion, but so far no decisions have been taken.

Foods.

No outbreaks of food poisoning have been reported during the year.

Meat and other Foods.

Meat is prepared for human food at the Minehead Abattoir, from where it is distributed throughout the districts of Minehead, Watchet, Williton and Dulverton. So far as is practical, all animals are inspected before slaughter, and all carcasses and offal are inspected in accordance with instructions laid down in Memo. 62 Foods, and appropriate action taken where required.

All places where food is prepared, etc., including the Abattoir, shops, stalls and vehicles, are inspected from time to time and action taken as required. Generally, the cleanliness of these establishments and vehicles is satisfactory.

Carcases Inspected and Condemned.

	Cattle excluding cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs
Number killed (if known)	683	339	923	8,652	360
Number inspected	683	339	923	8,652	360
All diseases except Tuberculosis Whole carcasses con- demned	8	11	11	35	3
Carcases of which some part of organ was con- demned	138	201	10	483	13
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis	21.37%	62.53%	2.28%	5.98%	4.14%
Tuberculosis only. Whole carcasses condemned	5	7	5	0	2
Carcases of which some part or organ was con- demned	17	81	0	0	6
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis	3.22%	25.93%	.54%	0	2.22%

Milk.

The milk supply during the year was satisfactorily maintained. Samples taken from time to time that did not come up to the required standard were investigated and the cause ascertained and remedied.

- (a) The total number of Registered Dairy Farms was 5.
- (b) The total number of Retailers was 5.
- (c) The number of supplementary licences issued to dealers or distributors whose dairy is outside this area was nil.

Thirty three samples were taken of Tuberculin Tested milk and 30 were found to be satisfactory.

One hundred and one samples of Pasteurised milk were taken and were all found to be satisfactory.

Manufacture of Ice Cream.

The regulations governing this manufacture and the requirements implicit in them have tended to restrict the preparation of ice cream to the large wholesale houses. The distributors find it more profitable to purchase their ice cream in bulk.

Three samples of ice cream submitted for examination during the summer showed that the bulk of the ice cream was of a relatively high grade.

Housing.

The total number of houses is 2,346. Nineteen houses were erected during the year: fourteen by the Local Authority and five by private enterprise. Fifteen houses were in course of erection at the close of the year.

146 houses are reported as unsatisfactory in that two families are occupying the same house.

The total number of applicants for Council Houses at the end of the year was 202.

There were no grants made under the Housing Act, 1949, by the Local Authority. An application was made by the Local Authority to the Ministry for the improvement of 40 houses in Lower Meadow Road, Alcombe, to provide bathrooms and additional kitchen space to houses erected in the period 1923 - 1925. The application for grant was approved by the Ministry, but work on the scheme is not proceeding owing to the greatly increased costs since the original estimate was prepared and proposals submitted.

Factories Act.

The Register of Factories is at present incomplete. Such inspections as have been made can therefore be no criterion as to the general administration of the Act.

As has been mentioned elsewhere in this report, a complete survey of the housing of the town is to be made in the autumn of 1952: thereafter it will be possible to give a complete return as required.

Overcrowding.

One case of overcrowding was reported and was satisfactorily dealt with.

Infectious Diseases.

A widespread epidemic of measles occurred which affected the town and the surrounding country. 354 cases were notified in the Minehead area. The bulk of the cases were of a mild type. There were no deaths.

Several cases of whooping cough occurred and a very few sporadic cases of the other notifiable diseases. There were no cases of Poliomyelitis.

Cases requiring institutional isolation are sent to Taunton Isolation Hospital.

Disinfection of premises after infectious disease is carried out by the Local Authority, also after cases of an unhygienic or unpleasant nature.

Tuberculosis.

There were 15 new cases of tuberculosis notified. There were no deaths.

Hospital.

The Minehead & West Somerset Hospital is entirely administered by the Bridgwater, Minehead & Butleigh Management Committee.

Local representation in the management of the Hospital exists in the House Committee of the Hospital, on which the town is represented. This Committee is responsible for the day to day supervision of the Institution and is empowered to make recommendations

and representations to the Committee of Management. The Committee of Management is represented on the Committee by three of its members.

Ambulance Services.

During the year under review the ambulance services vested by the Ministry in the County Council have been carried out by the St. John Ambulance Brigade to the entire satisfaction of the community. Under the arrangement with the County Council the cost of the running and maintenance of the ambulances is the concern of the County Council. Four full-time trained ambulance drivers are maintained. The remainder of the Service, which includes all night work, is carried out by the local ambulance and nursing divisions. This part of the Service is entirely voluntary and maintained with the financial support of the general public.

Clinics.

Clinics, with the exception of Infant Welfare, are now held at the Minehead and West Somerset Hospital.

Vital Statistics.

An analysis of the vital statistics shows that the total deaths registered were 125: in 1950 the number was 127.

The total live births were 83 compared with 96 the previous year.

With regard to the deaths occurring in age groups, 88 occurred over the age of 70, and of these 39 occurred between 70 and 80; 39 between 80 and 90 and 10 at 90 or over. It would seem that of the 125 deaths only 37 failed to reach the three score years and ten.

In considering the causes of death there is very little variation from the previous year. There were 22 deaths from malignant disease; 21 from vascular lesions of the nervous system. There were 56 deaths from heart disease; of these 13 were due to coronary disease of the heart. There were 3 deaths from influenza. When considered in conjunction with the deaths in age groups this calls for no comment.

Finally, there are two problems to which I called your attention in my last report, the water supply and the sewerage. These problems are still before you. The health of the town is implicit in the efficiency of these two services. Your water supply is adequate as will be seen from the section dealing with this matter. The sewerage is neither adequate nor efficient when considered in relation to storm water. Definite action is called for now, as the difficulties of dealing with it will increase disproportionately with the growth of the town. It has been under your consideration for some time and the additional information which has been collected points to the necessity for early action.

It is a matter of congratulation that a survey of the existing property of the area has been fixed for the coming year. When this has been completed it will be possible to have a clear conception of the housing requirements and the state of the property already in being.

One other matter calls for attention, that is the consideration of what steps can be taken to promote the preservation of the cleanliness of all food exposed for sale.

Of all these matters I would put the question of the sewerage system as a first priority.

I should like to close with an appreciation of the Council's co-operation and patience in dealing with the matters that I have brought before them, and to its servants for their courtesy, co-operation and help in all those matters concerning the public health.

W. BAIN,

M.B., B.S., Lond.,
Medical Officer of Health.

September, 1952.

